



# Health Services Research Unit's journey towards more equitable collaboration with public research partners

Magda Rzewuska Diaz, PhD

Peter Flockhart

on behalf of the HSRU Public Involvement Partnership (since 2017) group



1495



UNIVERSITY OF  
**ABERDEEN**

OILTHIGH OBAR DHEATHAIN



# How it all started....



Magda and Peter at HSRUK 2023 Conference

**Peter's blog:** "I noticed that there was very little PPI or acknowledgement of PPI. In one session I stayed behind at the end to specifically ask "Did you do PPI?"- oh yes was the reply, but "I didn't include it in the presentation". Really what's the point of asking for their input if you are not going to mention it?" <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/blog>

**Evidence:** An increasing acknowledgment in the health research community of the importance of fair recognition for public research partners (Kraft et al., BMJ2023; 17(380); Smith et al., Citiz Sci. 2019;4(1))

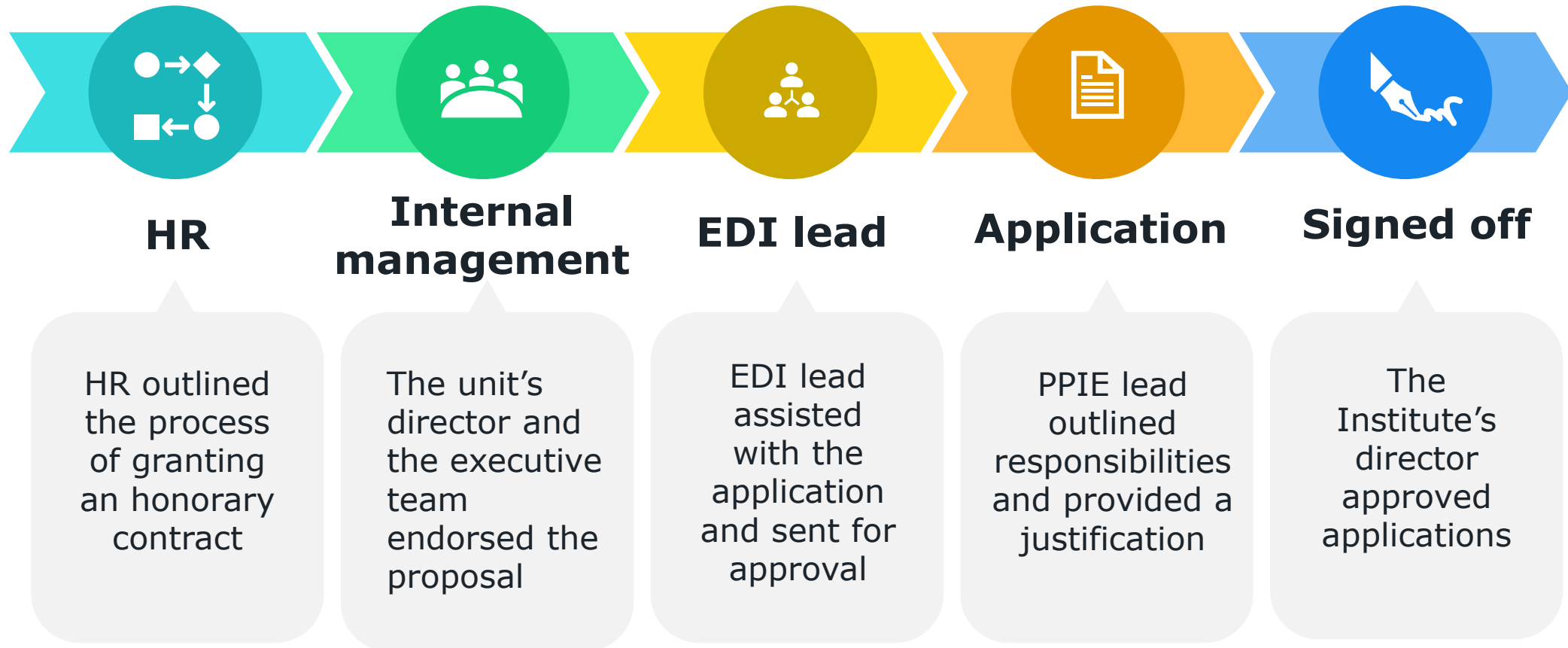
# Representation

We expanded the group to 12 by including three members from marginalised subpopulations

- 1 Advert drafted**  
People living in Grampian with a perceived sense of being 'underserved'
- 2 Advertised**  
At a local radio & Volunteer Scotland
- 3 Statement of values**  
Agreed with the current group & centred on tolerance and inclusivity
- 4 Interests expressed**  
An individual and an organisation supporting refugees contacted us
- 5 Onboarding**  
Needs discussed and documentation signed (e.g. a role description and privacy notice)
- 6 Buddy assigned**  
New members paired with the current ones who have undergone unconscious bias training

# Honorary contract

The Institute of Applied Health Sciences awarded the group honorary University contracts, marking a significant milestone for the institute and the group.







# Responsibilities outlined in the application

## PPIE educators & advocates



**Public engagement:**  
- face-to-face  
- social media outreach



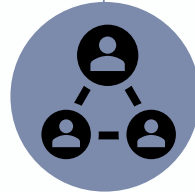
**PPIE-focused courses & training sessions**



**Supporting students**



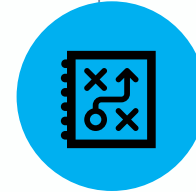
**Research projects:**  
- ideas  
- proposal  
- ethics  
- materials



**Study recruitment**



**Study co-applicants or on advisory groups**



**Optimising, problem-solving, evaluating PPIE strategy**



**Onboarding:**  
- interview panels  
- buddy











**Bi-monthly meetings & quick email responses**

## Partners in research

## PPIE strategy advisors

# Honorary contract's benefits

-  access to free university bus
-  library resources
-  IT facilities
-  access to staff training
-  fitness membership
-  academic email address
-  opportunities for PhD supervision
-  ID cards



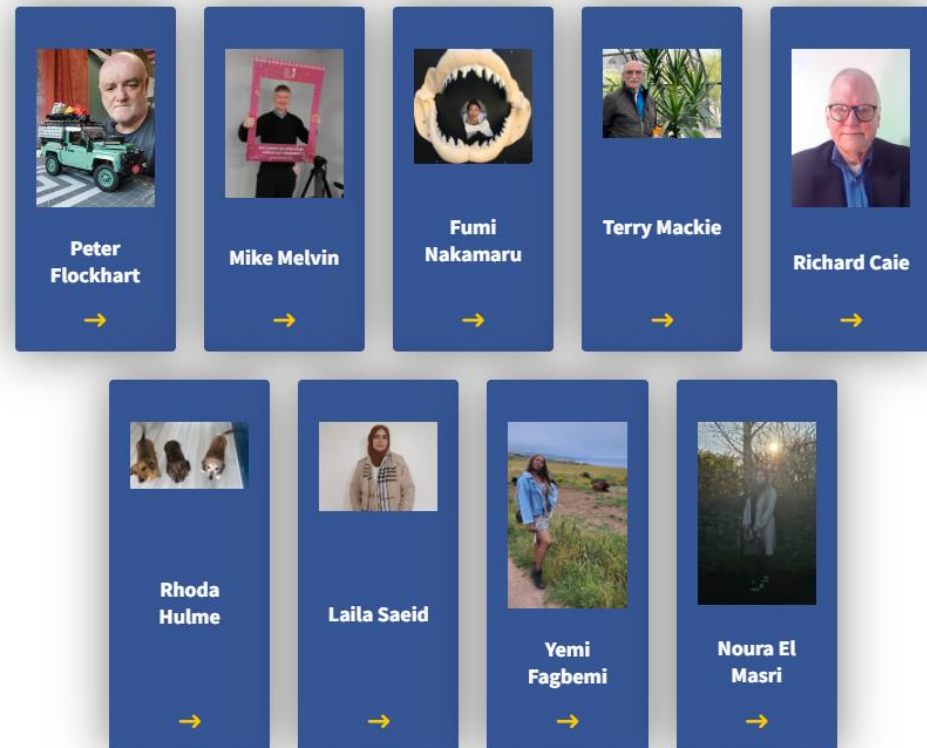
Fumi popped in to say thanks for the ID card and mentioned how she feels as though the University's doors are now open to her.

# Individualisation

The recognition that everyone is unique, and that each person's journey, experiences, talents and interest are distinct.

<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/what-we-do/ppie/getting-to-know-1222.php>

- ❑ Online profiles (optional)
- ❑ Members can propose ideas
- ❑ Task allocation based on interests, skills, and experiences





**Mike:** volunteering services manager



**Laila:** worked in Iraq as a volunteer in humanitarian organisations in refugee camps as a health promoter



**Fumi:** volunteer at community gardens, a PA to a professor, working as an editorial assistant for an economic journal



**Noura:** left Syria due to the war – now hopes to become a surgeon in the UK



**Peter:** retired driving examiner, cancer survivor, clinical skills centre volunteer



**Terry:** a retired engineer, member of the North of Scotland Research Ethics Committee, ROTARY, the Aberdeen Macular Society and the Aberdeen History Society



**Richard:** retired ship captain, North of Scotland Research Ethics Committee member



**Yemi:** works in the community as a support worker



**Rhoda:** a retired midwife and social worker, now provides childcare for one of her four grandchildren



# Payment guidance

We've developed guidelines for compensating patient/public research partners, setting clear staff expectations. Our current focus is on establishing sustainable and fair annual honoraria for the group.



Overview of the existing university payment process



Supporting forms



Models of costing



Additional guidance on payment to PPI partners



Discussing payment with public/patient research partners



Payment schedules



Record keeping of payment process

# Conclusions

- Including diverse voices necessitates a considerate approach but enriches the relevance and fairness of research.
- Initiatives such as expanding participation, honorary contracts, individualisation and fair compensation demonstrate our commitment to co-production and genuine partnership.
- Outcomes: aligning with University Strategy 2040 for inclusivity, while fostering clearer expectations, satisfaction, and effectiveness for public research partners and researchers.